

CHRISTMAS 2016

♪ The first Nowell, the angel did say, was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
in fields where they lay keeping their sheep on a cold winter's night that was so deep.
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Born is the king of Israel. ♪

What does “Noel” mean? [Nativity] / What language does it come from? [French]

In how many languages can you say / “Merry Christmas?”
Joyeaux Noel; Buon Natale; Feliz Navidad; etc.

That carol is about the Gospel reading.

The Good News the Angels are singing about – who is it for? / It is for Everyone! / And not only people



it's for all of creation / – wolf & the sheep,

the lion & the lamb, the bear & the cow –

These animals, all found in the Scriptures, are a sign the we can always get along, we can be at peace
– with the help of the Prince of Peace and the Spirit of God.

That's news that we all need to hear / and to do what we can to make it happen.

The message of Christmas is in another song. / It comes from the first reading. /
Will you help me sing it by singing each phrase back to me?

*♪ How beautiful / on the mountaintop / are the feet of those / who bring good news-
how beautiful / on the city streets are / the lips of those / who speak your peace. ♪*

There is another song / - not usually known as a Christmas Carol - / but
it really does carry / the message of Christmas / and is really the message of the 2nd reading.

*♪ I have loved you with an everlasting love,
I have called you and you are mine. ♪*

That is the message from the Acts of the Apostles: /

*God has brought forth from the descendants of David a savior for Israel. /
His name is Jesus / the Messiah / the one who loves us and forgives us. /*

We read a story during Advent that really sums up the meaning of Christmas for both Sr. Anna and me.
It is truly about what the angels told the shepherds – GOOD NEWS. It goes like this:

“OLD TURTLE AND THE BROKEN TRUTH”

ANNA

One night, in a far-away land that “is somehow not so far away,” a **truth** falls from the stars.
As it falls, it breaks into two pieces; one piece blazes off through the sky to a far-away place
– the **other piece** falls to earth in the Beautiful Land.

In the morning **Crow** found it, – picked it up,
but he & the other animals recognize that it is **broken**
the ground.



& incomplete so they leave it on

PETER One day, a human being stumbles upon the **truth** lying on the ground & finds
the words, “**You are loved**” carved on it.

It makes him feel good, so he keeps it & shares it with the people in **his** tribe.

The thing sparkles & makes the people who have it feel *warm & happy*.

It becomes their *most prized possession*, & they call it “**The Truth**.”

But those who **have** the **truth** grow afraid of – *those who don't have it*,
– those who are **different** from themselves.

And those who *don't have it* – *want to have it* for themselves.

Soon people are fighting wars over the little **truth**, – trying to capture it for themselves.

ANNA A little girl who is troubled by the growing violence, greed, & destruction
in her “once-peaceful” world goes on a journey – through
– the Mountains of Imagining, – the River of Wondering Why ?, & – the Forest of Finding Out –
she goes to speak with **Old Turtle**, ancient & wise as the mountains & seas.

Old Turtle tells her that the **Truth** is broken & **missing—a piece**,

– the piece that shot off into the night sky so long ago
– but most people are not ready to hear that fact.

She tells the little girl that the broken truth, & life itself, will be mended
only **when** one person meets another – someone from a different place – or with a
different face – or different ways – and sees & hears ... **herself**.

Old Turtle sends her back to her people, & gives her a stone.

When Little Girl gets back to her once beautiful world she tries to explain

that the truth **they** have is broken & incomplete, **but** no one will listen or understand.

Crow flies to the top of a high tower where the broken truth is kept

in a place where all could see it, & begins to caw.

The girl understands, & climbs up to the high place herself, bringing the stone with her.

When she joins her stone to the broken truth in the tower, the pieces fit together perfectly.

The rejoined pieces finally shine their **full message**:

PETER

ANNA

BOTH

“**You are loved / & so are they**.” – “**You are loved / & so are they**.” – “**You are loved / & so are they**.”

PETER – And the **people** **begin** to understand.

ANNA – And the **earth** **begins** to heal.



This day and this season is about healing and transformation.

It is a time of hope, but of hope that is hidden. It is about a hidden truth – one that is only half known. It is about a hidden love, That we are called to receive, and then give away.

We have another puppet that is a sign of what Jesus can do for us when we live the Christmas message. It is a Caterpillar that turns into a butterfly when you turn it inside out. The change that happens inside us when we hear and live the truth – that we are loved, and that “they” are too – is as great as the change that happens in nature to a caterpillar. I am reminded of a quote from Richard Bach,

"What the caterpillar calls the end of the world, the master calls a butterfly."

This transformation is something we see beginning at the celebration of Christmas. At first, all we see is a little baby at Christmas, and as the liturgical year goes on, -we see a child, then a man who goes around telling stories that are good news, -then someone who gets condemned & killed & finally someone who rises from the dead.

God says so clearly in Christ, “You are loved and so are they.”

That is the message of Christmas, that is the Good News we are here to celebrate at this Eucharist.

*♪ How beautiful | on the mountaintop | are the feet of those | who bring Good News -
how beautiful | on the city streets are | the lips of those | who speak your peace. ♪*

This year I received a Christmas card that moved me deeply, both because of what it said and because of the one who sent it. It was from a formerly incarcerated man who has become part of our family, even as he struggles to live in NYC. His handwritten message was:

Dear Peter,

Merry Christmas, brother.

May your gifts continue to fill the world with Christmas. Love, Terry

I passed that greeting on to the congregations we met with on Christmas Eve, and I want to pass it on to all of you who read this on our website:

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

MAY YOUR GIFTS CONTINUE TO FILL THE WORLD WITH CHRISTMAS!

Readings from Scripture [taken from the four sets given for Christmas in the Lectionary]

A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet
of the one who brings glad tidings,
announcing peace, bearing good news,
announcing salvation, and saying to Zion, "Your God is King!"

Hark! Your sentinels raise a cry, together they shout for joy,
for they see directly, before their eyes, the Lord restoring Zion.

Break out together in song, O ruins of Jerusalem!
For the Lord comforts his people, he redeems Jerusalem.
The Lord has bared his holy arm in the sight of all the nations;
all the ends of the earth will behold the salvation of our God.

The Word of the Lord.

(Isaiah 52:7-10, from the Mass during the Day)

A Reading from the Acts of the Apostles

When Paul reached Antioch in Pisidia he entered the Synagogue there.
He stood up, motioned them for silence, and began to speak:

"Fellow Israelites and you others who reverence our God,
listen to what I have to say!

The God of this people, Israel, chose our ancestors
and exalted the people during their sojourn in the land of Egypt.

'With an outstretched arm' the Lord led them out of Egypt.

Then God removed Saul and raised up David as king;
on his behalf the Lord testified, 'I have found David, son of Jesse,
to be a man after my own heart. He will carry out my every wish.'

According to his promise,

God has brought forth from this man's descendants,
Jesus, a savior for Israel.

John heralded the coming of Jesus

by proclaiming a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

As John's career was coming to an end, he would say,

'what do you suppose me to be? I am not the Messiah.

Rather, look for the one who comes after me.

I am not worthy to unfasten the sandals on his feet.'"

The Word of the Lord

(Acts 13:16-17, 22-25 from the Vigil Mass)

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke

In those days Caesar Augustus published a decree ordering a census of the whole world.

This first census took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.

Everyone went to register, each to their own town.

And so Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to David's town of Bethlehem – because he was of the house and lineage of David- to register with Mary, his espoused wife, who was with child.

While they were there the time came for her to have her child and she gave birth to her first-born son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

There were shepherds in that region, living in the fields and keeping night watch by turn over their flock.

The angel of the Lord appeared to them

as the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were very much afraid.

The angel said to them: "Do not be afraid! I come to proclaim good news to you – tidings of great joy to be shared by the whole people.

For today in the city of David a savior has been born to you, who is the Messiah and Lord.

Let this be a sign to you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." Suddenly, there was with the angel

a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth

to those on whom God's favor rests."

When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to one another: "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this event which the Lord has made known to us." They

went in haste and found Mary and Joseph,

and the baby lying in the manger; once they saw,

they made known the message that had been told them concerning this child.

All who heard of it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds.

Mary treasured all these things and reflected on them in her heart.

The shepherds returned,

glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen,

just as it had been told to them.

The Gospel of the Lord

(Luke 2:1-20 from midnight & dawn)